

In the Beginning

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John 1:1-18

When I became a Christian many years ago, my mentors recommended me to start reading the Bible from John's Gospel. In fact, it is the most quoted and well known among the Gospels.

We have four Gospels in the Bible. The first three, Matthew, Mark and Luke are called **synoptic Gospels**. John's Gospel is known as "**the Spiritual Gospel**". Gospel of John's order of accounts is very different than that of the synoptics. Each Gospel writer has a certain emphasis and an audience. When it was recommended to that I read this Gospel as a new Christian, I thought it was going to be simple and easy. On the contrary, I found out that it was pretty deep. John presented to me a lot of theological topics about the nature of **Jesus Christ, the Son of God who invited me to BELIEVE in HIM.**

The author of the Gospel is John, the "**beloved disciple**" of Christ, the son of Zebedee. The expression "the beloved disciple" is mentioned five times in the Gospel. John, along with Peter and James created the inner circle of Jesus.

Why did John write his Gospel? He answers this question:

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (20:30,31 NIV)

We talk about faith. It is very important to have faith in Jesus. In the Gospel of John, the word **faith** has not been mentioned. While the word **faith** is not there, the word **to believe** (*in different forms*) is mentioned 98 times: "**by believing you may have life in his name...**"

Do we graduate from believing in Jesus? Never. This Gospel will encourage us to walk in faith by continually believing in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can discuss this Gospel more while we read through chapters and find out who Christ is.

I will try to introduce the first 18 verses today. It is a prologue, written in poetic sections or stanzas. In a very special way, John will enter to his Gospel. In fact, this introduction **covers major themes** that will be introduced later in his Gospel. Light, darkness, Jesus is God, believe in him, the rejection of Jesus.... It is like the overture of an opera where the composer touches on the main themes.

Let us begin:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5 NIV)

Wow, what an introduction! We can spend hours discussing only those five verses.

1. “In the beginning...” “the identity of Christ” Սկիզբէն... Քրիստոսի Ինքնութիւնը

Where is the Christmas story here?

- Mark starts with “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ” and with John the Baptist’s ministry connected with the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah.
- Matthew starts with the narrative thirty years earlier with the conception of Jesus, then the genealogy of Jesus.
- Luke goes back six months before the birth of Jesus with the conception of the John the Baptist. Then with the genealogy of Jesus going all the way back to Adam.
- John, wait a minute. He goes **to the beginning**, all the way to the first verse in the Bible. **In the beginning...** (Gen 1:1a)
- John goes even before the creation of cosmos saying the **Word, Logos, Christ existed before everything**. John uses the verb *was* four times.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. (John 1:1,2 NIV)

In the beginning, there existed the Logos, the Word.

I see some important points here:

- In Genesis, the climax of creation is that God created humans.
- In John, the climax is God spoke to humans through His Son, the Word became flesh.

- In the beginning was the **Word (Logos)**

What is the Word?

We use words for communication, and they are powerful. A few weeks ago, I performed a wedding ceremony, and at the end I pronounced the couple to be husband and wife. That is a powerful announcement. From that moment and on, they actually became husband and wife.

In the OT we find God spoke words **dabar** and things happened; this is very powerful...

- We see God's powerful activity in creation, revelation, and deliverance.
- God spoke, and the world was created: **"Let there be light'; and there was light"** (Gen 1:3 ESV).
- The **"word of the Lord"** came to the prophets, bringing revelation.
- And God's word was a **delivering** word:
"He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Ps 107:20 ESV).

So, Why Jesus should be identified by Word? The author of Hebrews describes that:

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he (God) has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. (Heb 1:1,2 NIV)

Don Carson writes:

"God's 'Word' in the Old Testament is his powerful self-expression in creation, revelation and salvation, and the personification of that 'Word'

makes it suitable for John to apply it as a title to God's ultimate self-disclosure, the person of his own Son."¹

Then John describes that this Word was God.

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Do you see the relationship here between **Christ and God the Father?**

The Word wasn't simply with God, he *was* in front of Him, face-to-face with Him.

John's intention is to describe that the Word is not just a philosophical concept, it is a being, alive, powerful and it is God.

- Please notice John does not use Jesus or Christ. He uses the **word *logos*** that both Jews and Gentiles will understand. I explained how a Jewish audience would understand this introduction by relating it to Genesis ("in the beginning").

The Greek would identify with this word as well. **The Greek philosophers** understood ***logos*** to be the rational concepts, ideas and principles by which things existed; the reason or thought that gave order to the universe.

John is a good communicator and preacher.

He is creative. He is using the terms that the audience will get.

In summary, **John is describing who Jesus is.** Jesus is not just simply a good rabbi and a carpenter who came to do some good moral teaching. We are talking about God. Christ is divine. He was God, and he is God. John will further develop this in his Gospel.

2. Logos and Creation Բանը էլ Ստեղծագործութիւնը

³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:3 NIV)

As I mentioned before, John's opening is related to the opening of Genesis.

Through Logos all things were made. Logos, Jesus is the agent of creation.

Paul described this wonderfully:

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16,17 NIV)

I see John is preparing us **for creation, recreation**. As we will see, he will tell Nicodemus that he needs to be born again, born from above. In Genesis, God created us. We failed and sinned. John's Gospel is presenting **a new creation with and through Jesus**. John is preparing us for the story of Salvation.

2 Corinthians 4:6, **"For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."**

3. Life and Light in the Darkness Կեանք եւ Լոյս Խաւարին Մէջ

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4,5 NIV)

John introduces that this *Logos* is not a static thing, **it is alive, and it gives life**. The **Word** is the source of life, and in order to live, we should embrace Him.

This theme runs throughout John's story. The word **"life" occurs 36 times** in this gospel.

Then the theme of **light appears**. In creation, God separated light from darkness. Here we see that **Christ is life, and light**. **His life is light**, and not any light, a light that heals, creates, transforms, saves, and takes us away from darkness. It is liberation from aro tten, dark life.

Yet, darkness did not want light, it did not "overcome it" or "comprehend it" (NASB)

Then we get a new theme, the story of John the Baptist. I will skip that story now, and continue with the poetry from verse 9:

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

(¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.)

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Again we get rest of the story of John the Baptist. (verse 15)

¹⁶Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Application:

I recorded this sermon in front of this lighted tree. This is not a Christmas tree, though it reminds us of that. I asked myself, tree, that represents life, with lights on. This tree is a good metaphor how Jesus is life and light.

There are many applications one can take from those verses in the introduction. My Lord, My Jesus, My Savior, is divine. He was with God and He was God. He came to us and brought life and light to our dark world.

“For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV)

Life and light: Oh, how much we need a new life, a new creation. Oh, how much we need light that gives us life, everlasting life, not any life. His life transforms my life, makes me a new creation and transforms me. Let us worship Him. Let us believe in Him. Let us be open that His recreation continues in each of us.
Amen

1. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 116.